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UNCLAS HARARE 000262

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR AF/PDPA FOR DALTON, MITCHELL AND SIMS  
NSC FOR JENDAYI FRAZER  
LONDON FOR GURNEY  
PARIS FOR NEARY  
NAIROBI FOR PFLAUMER

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: GOVERNMENT PAPER REFUSES TO APOLOGIZE FOR  
DISTORTED REPORTING

- ¶1. On January 25, UN WFP Envoy James Morris took the government-owned "Herald" to task for gross distortions in their report of his remarks after a January 24 meeting with Robert Mugabe. Morris characterized the "Herald's" article as "100 percent lies."
- ¶2. On January 29, Japan's Ambassador to Zimbabwe wrote a letter to the "Herald" complaining bitterly of the paper's "fabrications" and "misrepresentations" in their January 28 report about his meeting with Information Minister Jonathan Moyo.
- ¶3. On February 4, U.S. Ambassador Sullivan wrote the "Herald" to refute the paper's false account of his effort to be allowed to observe the Morgan Tsvangirai trial.
- ¶4. On February 6, the "Herald" responded to this string of journalistic mistakes with a defensive editorial entitled "Mistakes are different from falsehoods." Excerpts follow.
- ¶5. "Newspapers throughout the world are not immune to making mistakes and 'The Herald' is no exception. However, there is a clear distinction between a mistake and publishing falsehoods. Any newspaper worth its salt knows that it is a cardinal sin to create fictitious stories, as this is detrimental to its credibility. It is, indeed, normal for different publications or broadcasters to make divergent interpretations to a news event. It is in this regard that 'The Herald' takes great exception to attempts by the discredited opposition mouthpiece, 'The Daily News,' to equate mistakes made by this newspaper to lies published by 'The Daily News. . .'"

"It is every newspaper's journalistic right to put into context, rightly or wrongly, statements made by public officials. There is nothing new in this. It is only foolishness or malice to say our interpretation was a quote because it clearly was not written as such. . . So we have no apologies to make to either Ambassador Liyama or Special Envoy Morris for doing our job as journalists but it is their job to be categorical when answering reporters' questions. If either Special Envoy Morris or Ambassador Liyama believe we have contravened any law, we are ready to have that tested and determined in a court of law and not on the pages of an opposition newspaper."

SULLIVAN